The Builder.

No. CCLXXII.

SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 1848.

N December, 1846, we gave some particulars of the life of Sir John Soane, and put into a connected form a review, by Mr. Tite, of part of a course of lectures delivered by Soane in 1817.* As we then remarked, information concerning the architect of the Bank, and the founder of an extraordinary museum, which will one day be made more available to the public than it is now, will be sought for hereafter. "His architectural works are being rapidly effaced; there is no worthy engraved record of his designs; his opinions, so far as we know, are only to be found in his locked-up MS. lectures, and although so recently dead, he is positively a man unknown to the rising generation of architects."

At the Institute of Architects on Monday evening last, this review was continued, elucidated by a large number of the drawings originally used in illustration of the lectures; and we will endeavour to give it, as before, a connected shape in our pages, first mentioning the previous proceedings of the meeting, that our record of the institute may be complete.

Mr. Charles Fowler was in the chair, and Mr. Fergusson was elected honorary member, and Mr. J. J. Cole, fellow.—Mr. G. Godwin said he had received a letter from their friend, Mr. Britton, which he thought, with the exception of a personal reference in it (for which he asked their excuse), they would be glad to hear. Quite recently, Mr. Britton's recovery from an illness, which had prostrated him for many weeks, had been pronounced impossible by his doctors, and Mrs. Britton had fortified herself to discharge the duties of his survivor. Strange to say, however, while the former had regained his health, Mrs. Britton, since the date of the letter he was about to read, had died: so inscrutable were the ways of Providence. He felt sure that the meeting would pardon him for an expression of sympathy, on an occasion which affected one to whom every member of the profession, and every lover of our ancient edifices, were deeply indebted. The letter was as follows:—

"Having complete confidence in your friendship, I have named you executor of my small property after my decease, and am now troubling you with a little commission, whilst I remain alive to see and enjoy the company of friends.

The Royal Institute of British Architects made me an honorary member of their society soon after its formation; and I can assure you and them, that it not only gave me much pleasure at the time, but it has been a source of cheering gratification ever since. I can only regret that my want of leisure and health have conspired, to preclude me from rendering any essential service to the Institute in return.

It is my wish now to offer for its acceptance a few articles, which may be useful or amusing to some of the members. These are—

A model of Salisbury Cathedral, by White of Bristol.

A model of Redcliffe Church, by the same.

A model of the Canynge Monument, by the same.

The original copies of the Lectures on Architecture, delivered by Thomas Sandby, at the Royal Academy:

* See Vol. VI., p. 577, and p. 590.

And MS. collections for a Biographical Dictionary of English Architects, by J. Chambers.

The last is calculated to form a foundation for a good and interesting "Dictionary of English Architects," which might be well executed by members of the Institute. A committee should be named to digest a plan, and appoint members and strangers to write memoirs. A work thus executed might be made to pay its expenses by public sale."

Mr. George Mair, with an expression of respect, moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Britton, which was seconded by Mr. Lee.—Mr. Tite said although it must be unnecessary, in a meeting of architects, to speak one word in favour of Mr. Britton's claim to their consideration, he could not refrain from an expression of his own. One of the works so kindly presented by him on that occasion—"Sandby's Lectures"—was cognate to the business of the evening; and he hoped that hereafter some member would lay an abstract of Sandby's opinions before a meeting of the institute.—The Chairman also spoke very warmly of the services rendered to the art by Mr. Britton.

Mr. Tite then returned to his review of Soane's lectures in 1817. His previous notes referred to the first three; and he had proposed, on the present occasion, completing the course, but found there would not be time to deal with more than the fourth and part of the fifth, treating chiefly of the classic, and the introduction of Gothic architecture. Having previously considered the application of the Orders, and the use of caryatides, the lecturer had treated of insulated columns, of which Homer mentions one of the earliest, saying that Ulysses raised a column to Elphinor. According to Pope:—

"The rising tomb, the lofty column bore.
And high above it rose the tapering oar."

A description not very understandable. A rostrated column was erected by the Romans in honour of Duilius, who gained the first victory over the Carthaginians. Columns were sometimes presented by individuals: this was the case for the temple at Jackly, where each column has a tablet upon it recording the name of the donor. The ancients took pride in the erection of porticoes of immense size: some occur at Palmyra, with four, five, and six rows of columns. Pompey's Portico was a work of great grandeur. Augustus erected a portico to his sister Octavia, of which there are considerable remains. Mere screens of columns, like that by Holland, formerly before Carlton House, Soane objected to. The epigram on this screen, by Bonomi, was alluded to,—thus anglicised by Prince Hoare (as Mr. Scoles afterwards mentioned)—

"Dear little columns, all in a row,
What *do* you do there?
Indeed we don't know."

Speaking of the use of pilasters, it was remarked that, in Greek works, antæ were chiefly confined to decoration, and were never used without columns. According to Vitruvius, they should be of the same diameter as the columns, but, in reality, they are met with of all diameters. The mouldings, forming cap of the antæ, were sometimes continued along the walls from antæ to antæ. At Palmyra, antæ occur at the ends, and then at equal intervals, and this appeared to be the first example of what has been so often imitated, but, according to Soane, was a great misapplication of them. In the circular temples of Rome and Tivoli there were no pilasters on the cella corresponding with the surrounding range of columns, for an obvious reason; but Bramante, in a building of this kind, had crowded pilasters behind the columns, with a bad effect:—

"'Tis use alone that sanctifies expense,
And splendour borrows all her rays from sense."

Columns in ranges, says Soane, ought never to be broken by pilasters: they destroy the unity of composition, so much to be desired. Entablatures over pilasters ought not to be so heavy as where over columns. Insulated pilasters occur in the remains of antiquity.—as, for instance, in the sepulchral monument of Mylassa, and in the little temple on the Clitumnus. Advocates for the practice say it avoids the appearance of hanging in the air otherwise given to the entablature. Houses in Queen-street, Lindsay House, Lincoln's-inn-fields, and Shaftesbury House, Aldersgate-street, were pointed to as instances of the successful use of pilasters.

Concerning pedestals, he said, Vitruvius spoke of the stereobate, probably a plain block, and also of the stylobate, a continued pedestal, as at Tivoli and the *Maison Carrée*, at Nismes. He thought pedestals under detached columns inadmissible, though the Greeks and Romans used them in many instances, as in the Stoa, at Athens.

Of pediments Soane remarked, this important feature, originating from necessity, by its beautiful and impressive form becomes peculiarly interesting when classically and correctly introduced. The pediment, till the time of Julius Cæsar, who was allowed as a mark of respect to have one to his private house, had been confined to temples. The ordinary reason, given by Soane, for the greater elevation of Roman pediments than those used by the Greeks, Mr. Tite said he had never thought satisfactory. Pediments of the low pitch were found in parts of Greece where much rain fell.

Soane reprobated the use of pediments internally, considering that they represented the end of a roof, and thought if principles founded on reason and truth were to guide us, that more than one pediment should not be introduced in the same front: with the latter Mr. Tite did not agree, as the roofing of a large building might be so arranged as absolutely to require more.

The use of pediments inside the Pantheon was excusable, on the ground that it was an hypæthral temple, and the openings needed *roofs* over them! It was remarked that the tympanum projects before the frieze in ancient examples, to shew the sculptures prominently. In the Louvre, Lord Spencer's house (Green-park), and Devonshire House, he considered the pediments badly introduced.

A balustrade he thought useful and beautiful, but it was never used with propriety except to flat roofs. Balustrades stopping against pediments were very objectionable. Balustrades in bridges seemed to want massiveness: the ancient bridges had solid parapets.

In speaking of the size of ancient structures, Sir John Soane said,—

"The Palace of Diocletian at Spalatro occupied a space of between nine and ten acres, and contained apartments for the emperor, his officers, and attendants, also halls, and open spaces for exercise of different kinds; two temples of considerable dimensions added to the magnificence of this mighty edifice, of which enough remains to determine with tolerable accuracy the forms and dimensions of the principal apartments, and at the same time makes a most excellent commentary on part of Vitruvius.

The plans of this building, as well as those of the baths, are full of the most beautiful forms, ingeniously combined: the intricacy, elegance, variety, and taste in the disposition

For more information on OCR and PDF Compression visit our website